

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3441

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USMISSION USUN

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SS, SP, MO, UN

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: SPANISH FINANCE MINISTER SAYS GOS NOW
EXTREMELY CONCERNED

1. THE SPANISH FINANCE MINISTER -- WHO IS ALSO SECOND VICE-PREMIER -- CABELLO DE ALBA, RAISED THE SAHARA WHEN HE LUNCHED WITH ME TODAY. HE SAID THAT UNSYG WALDHEIM HAD "PEERED INTO THE ABYSS" DURING HIS TRIP AND HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY ALARMED BY HIS TALKS IN ALGIERS. HE HAD GIVEN THE GOS HIS ESTIMATE OF THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND HAD SAID THAT HE WAS ACCELERATING HIS RETURN TO US IN ORDER TO SEE THE SECRETARY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

2. ACCORDING TO CABELLO DE ALBA, WALDHEIM'S VISIT TO THE AREA HAD POINTED UP THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE MOROCCAN INSISTENCE ON A STRAIGHT HANOVER OF THE TERRITORY AND THE ALGERIAN AND THE ALGERIAN BACKED F POLISARIO INDEPENDENCE FRONT INSISTENCE OF SELF-DETERMINATION. HE SAID WALDHEIM TOLD GOS THAT THE ALGERIANS WERE NOT ONLY CONFIDENTIAL

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THREATENING HOSTILITIES AGAINST THE MOROCCANS, PERHAPS

THROUGH THEIR F POLISARIO SURROGATES, SHOULD THE GREEN MARCH GO THROUGH, BUT WERE TALKING ABOUT PROJECTING THEIR IRE OVER THE SAHARA INTO THE WHOLE MIDDLE EAST ARENA. THE ALGERIANS WERE PARTICULARLY ANGERED BY SOME OF THE SUPPORT OTHER ARABS WERE GIVING TO MOROCCANS.

3. CABELLO DE ALBA REITERATED THE TRADITIONAL SPAISH POSITION THAT THEY WISH TO GET OUT OF THE SAHARA WITHOUT SHEDDING A DROP OF SPANISH BLOOD, BUT FOUND THAT IN THE MEASURE THAT THEY MOVE TOWARD MOROCCO, THE POSSIBILITY OF F POLISARIO ACTION AGAINST THE SPANIARDS INCREASED. THE REPORT OF A POSSIBLE ATTACK LAST NIGHT AGAINST SPANISH IN EL AIUUN WAS THE REASON THAT A CURFEW HAD BEEN IMPOSED IN THE SAHARA BY THE SPANISH GOVT. AT THE SAME TIME HASSAN APPEARS DETERMINED TO GO AHEAD WITH THE GREEN MARCH NO MATTER WHAT.

4. CABELLO DE ALBA THEN ALPEALED THAT USG SHOULD EXERCISE ITS "WELL-KNOWN" INFLUENCE TO STOP HASSAN. HE SAID GOS BELIEVED HASSAN WAS DEPENDENT ON US. I POINTED OUT THAT EVEN THOUGH WE WERE NEUTRAL ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE QUESTION WE HAD VERY RECENTLY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HASSAN TO URGS CAUTION AND TO STRESS OUR HOPE FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. I SAID THAT I DID NOT THINK WE WERE IN ANY POSITION TO STOP THE MARCH NOW IN COURSE. CABELLO DE ALBA RESPONDE THAT HASSAN HAD INDEED HAZARDED HIS THRONE ON THE MARCH, BUT HE COULD GET THE SAHARA SO LONG AS THERE WAS SOME KIND OF SELF-DETERMINATION. IF THE MARCH - INTO WHICH THE PLO AND ALL SORTS OF TROUBLEMAKERS HAD INSERTED THEMSELVES - GOT UNDERWAY, THE SPANYARDS WOULD HAVE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AND THERE WAS SURE TO BE ANTRAGEDY. THE SHEDDING OF SPANISH BLOOD -- AND THE POSSIBLE HUMILIATION OF ITS MILITARY -- WOULD HAVE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS ON THE FUTURE COURSE OF SPANISH POLITICS.

5. I REITERATED OUR NEUTRALITY AND THE FACT THAT WE WERE IN NO WAY DESIROUS OF BEING REGARDED AS A MEDIATOR. I PROMISED TO REPORT THE CONVERSATION, BUT NOTED THAT I HAD ENCOUNTERED CONSIDERABLE RESERVE WITHIN GOS ABOUT DISCUSSING THE TYPE OF AGREEMENT THAT WAS BEING CONSIDERED WITH THE

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MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS. CABELLO DD ALBA SAID HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS.

6. COMMENT: AS WE HEARD TODAY FROM OTHER SOURCES AS WELL, EVENTS HAVE THROWN SOME COLD WATER ON THE THEORY THAT SPAIN COULD SIMPLY DO A DEAL WITH MOROCCO, PREVENT THE GREEN MARCH, AND PULL OUT WITHOUT RISKING ITS TROOPS AND ITS PRESTIGE. CABELLO DE ALBA ALSO FRANKTY ADMITTED THAT THEY

HAD A STRATEGIC DEPENDENCY ON ALGERIA FOR NATURAL GAS AND
WISHED TO AVOID MAKING AN ENEMY OF ALGERIA. SINCE
CABELLO DE ALBA HAD BEEN WITH ARIAS EARLIER TODAY, I
CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN
REQUESTED BY ARIAS TO RAISE THE SAHARA WITH ME. IN ANY
EVENT, HE IS A MAJOR CABINET FIGURE AND CERTAINLY REFLECTS
A NEW, MORE PESSIMISTIC SPANISH APPRECIATION OF THE
POSSIBILITIES FOR AVOIDING CONFLICT.

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